

WCC-2016-Res-023-EN

Protection for the serranids and syngnathids occurring off the Spanish coasts

OBSERVING that the highest levels of marine biodiversity in Europe are concentrated along the Spanish coasts, and that these coasts contain numerous unique ecosystems, a natural heritage that forms part of the NATURA 2000 Network;

INDICATING that the populations of many of these marine species are experiencing a dramatic, alarming decline due, among other things, to urban pressure on the coastlines, overfishing, dumping and the pollution of both the water and the seabed;

CONSIDERING that in order to achieve the effective conservation of marine ecosystems, it is necessary to identify keystone species, biological indicators of these species' state of health, which at the same time can act as 'umbrella' species, helping to conserve entire habitats;

HIGHLIGHTING the fact that fish are the group that is most vulnerable and affected, including the families Serranidae and Signatidae, species that are generally solitary, territorial and linked to ecosystems of great ecological value, such as seagrass meadows and coral beds, which places them at the top of the food chains in these coastal ecosystems;

WARNING that in most of these species the viability of their populations is being compromised in many traditional areas where they occurred, since they are species of high value to fisheries;

AWARE that public opinion is not adequately informed, that except in cases such as that of the dusky grouper (*Epinephelus marginatus*) or seahorses, most of the species have not been assessed properly in the Red List due to lack of scientific knowledge, and that regulations currently in place in Spain do not have the power needed to curb this situation; and

RECOGNISING that to achieve effective management resulting in the protection of these species, as well as the comprehensive conservation of the ecosystems in which they occur, an international initiative is required, as is a framework or coverage at a European Union directive level;

The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Hawai'i, United States of America, 1-10 September 2016:

1. CALLS ON the Director General to:
 - a. collaborate with Members and Commissions, especially in a European and Mediterranean context, to achieve greater awareness of the conservation of coastal biodiversity, and more specifically the protection of serranids;
 - b. provide technical and programmatic support to promote and strengthen existing initiatives and to share information on their conservation;
 - c. urge European member states, and Spain in particular, as well as their regional governments, to promote effective measures to protect these species, through specific regulations and management plans highlighting the importance of protecting their habitat and increasing its connectivity; and
 - d. increase efforts to assess the conservation status of all commercial species of serranids and syngnathids;
2. ENCOURAGES all Members to cooperate actively in the conservation of these species and/or the dissemination of the problems they face off the Spanish – and by extension – European, coasts; and
3. URGES the European Union and its Member States to provide funds for the study and conservation of these emblematic, keystone species for European coastal ecosystems.

State and agency Members of the United States abstained during the vote on this motion for reasons given in the U.S. General Statement on the IUCN Motions Process.